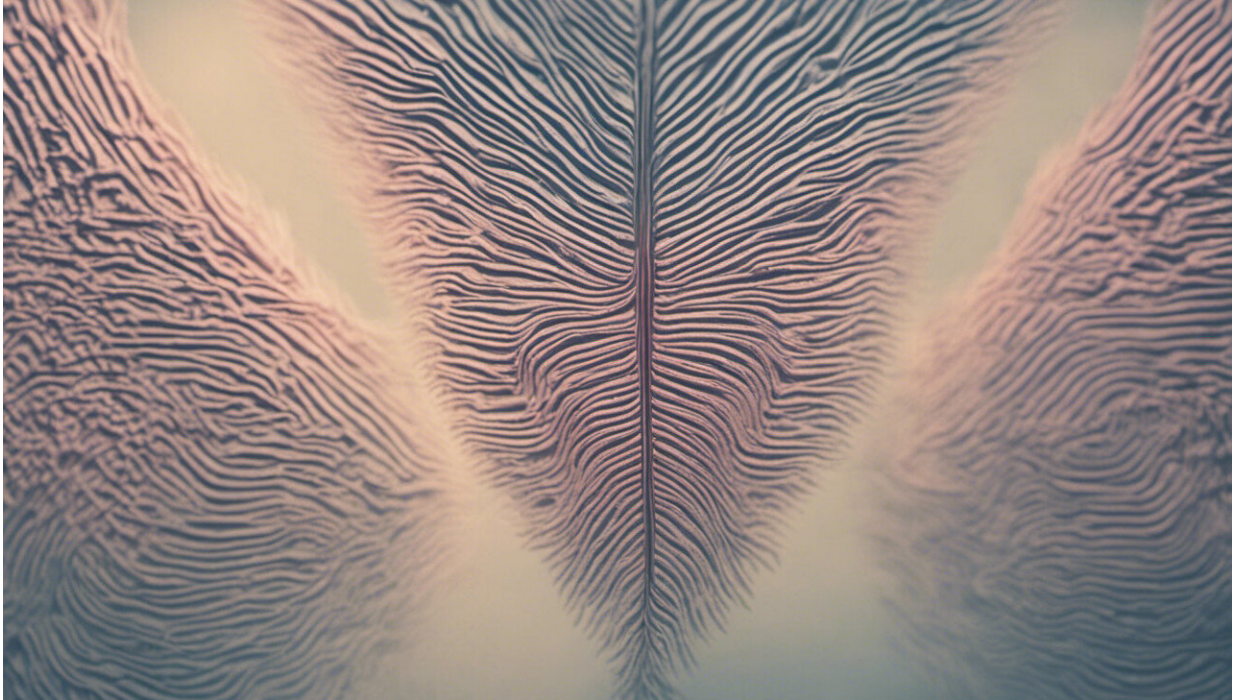


# COVID-19: Shifting attitudes to migration?

May 20 2020

---



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Attitudes towards migrants, shaped during the current COVID-19 crisis, could have a significant impact on future political decision-making about immigration policy, according to an article this week from Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS).

Highlighting particularly the foreign born staff among essential workers in the health and social care sectors, the report shows some 18.2% of

essential health staff and 15.7% of essential social work and residential care are from overseas.

Published by the Oxford Review of Economic Policy, the article comes in the same week as the Government presses ahead with new post-Brexit migration legislation. Written by COMPAS colleagues Mariña Fernández-Reino, Madeleine Sumption and Carlos Vargas-Silva, it focuses on the role played by migrants as much-lauded key workers during the current crisis.

According to the COMPAS report, "It is not clear that the pandemic fundamentally changes what we know about the economic consequences of migration....It may thus be that the political impacts of the crisis—how it affects attitudes towards migrant workers and their contributions to society and the economy—will in the long run be more important than any change to policymakers' understanding of how the crisis affects the economics of migration."

In the last few days, COMPAS academics, along with researchers from Bristol and Amsterdam, have also raised concerns over the assumption that transnational marriages are bad for integration. In a new work, "Marriage, Migration and Integration," the authors challenge assertions that new family members from overseas will 'drag social progress back from modern values."

Debunking myths, in a detailed analysis, the authors maintain, "The irony of a simplistic portrayal of transnational marriage is that it reinforces the negative stereotypes that are themselves a barrier to integration.

"It should be possible to address gender inequality, and advocate services, without denigrating the family practices of entire ethnic groups. Instead of finger-pointing at newcomers, we could focus on unlocking

the assets people bring—the under-use of migrants' educational qualifications for instance—and the benefits of facilitating the full participation of all residents in the country's economic, social, cultural and political life."

Meanwhile, this week's article emphasises, "Governments should consider the role of migration alongside other potential solutions to labour demand in essential industries. These include whether demand can be met from the domestic labour force by increasing wages and improving working conditions, or by relying on labour-saving technologies."

It stresses, new proposals emphasise 'skills' in the immigration system, "Some of the criticism includes the over-reliance on educational credentials and the exclusion of soft skills, which are valued in both the [labour market](#) and educational settings (Heckman and Kautz, 2012)."

But, according to the article, more than half of EU-born and 42% of non-EU born full-time employees in essential occupations do not meet the proposed skills requirement or salary threshold. Close to 45% of EU-born employees and 31.7% of non-EU born full-time employees in essential occupations do not meet the proposed skills requirement because the job does not meet the skills threshold of the new immigration rules.

The article considers three key aspects for governments to consider, "First, whether the management of emergencies requires a certain type of [immigration policy](#). Second, whether the experience of the current pandemic brings to light new information about the 'value' of certain types of immigration. And finally, whether immigration is the right response to pandemic-driven demand or employers should be expected to look for other alternatives."

Provided by University of Oxford

Citation: COVID-19: Shifting attitudes to migration? (2020, May 20) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-covid-shifting-attitudes-migration.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.